

MODERN WORKS OF ART.

THE PANORAMA OF THE NILE.

This magnificent and stupendous painting, now on view at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, is a most superb and original work of art. Faithfully and vividly portraying the grand mountainous scenery, the wonderful ancient colossal ruins and statues on the banks of the river Nile, it carries the spectator with it on an imaginary voyage from Grand Cairo, 1700 miles along that famous river's western banks, to its second cataract, which forms the boundary between Nubia and Ethiopia, and having reached thus far, a pause ensues, and the journey partakes of a retrograde movement facing the eastern banks on its return.

In this splendid work of art, the spectator has a faithful and picturesque representation of that delightful oriental scenery which the pen can but feebly describe. The most prominent objects in the first section of the painting, are the rising of the Nile, and the Sitting Statues, considered to be the greatest curiosities in Egypt. The second section brings before the eye of the spectator the Great Pyramids, the Desert, with its fearful simoom or sand-storm, and concludes with a grand representation of the Great Sphinx of the Desert. This is by far the grandest part of the exhibition, and portrays the dazzling and luminous sky of an eastern clime magnificently before the eye; the scorching atmosphere and burning rays of the sun, as it seems to be withering up everything before it in the great desert, brings forcibly to the memory all the fearful accounts which tradition and history speaks of, where the parched-up and dying travellers meet with a fearful end in these sultry regions of the east.

Then comes the sand-storm, which swallows up all before it in one huge flying mountain of scorching sand. Here the painter has certainly studied nature to the very life; for no description of the pen can do justice to the magnificence of this portion of the panorama. The sun-lit desert seems to oppress one with an unbearable heat, whilst the flying sand-storm makes the spectator inadvertently shudder at its approach. The clearness and transparency of an eastern atmosphere is also beautifully given; together with the various astronomical and lunar peculiarities which the tropics display to the wondering gaze of the traveller.

The authenticity of the designs are vouched for as being the work of Mr. Joseph Bonomi; and the panorama is

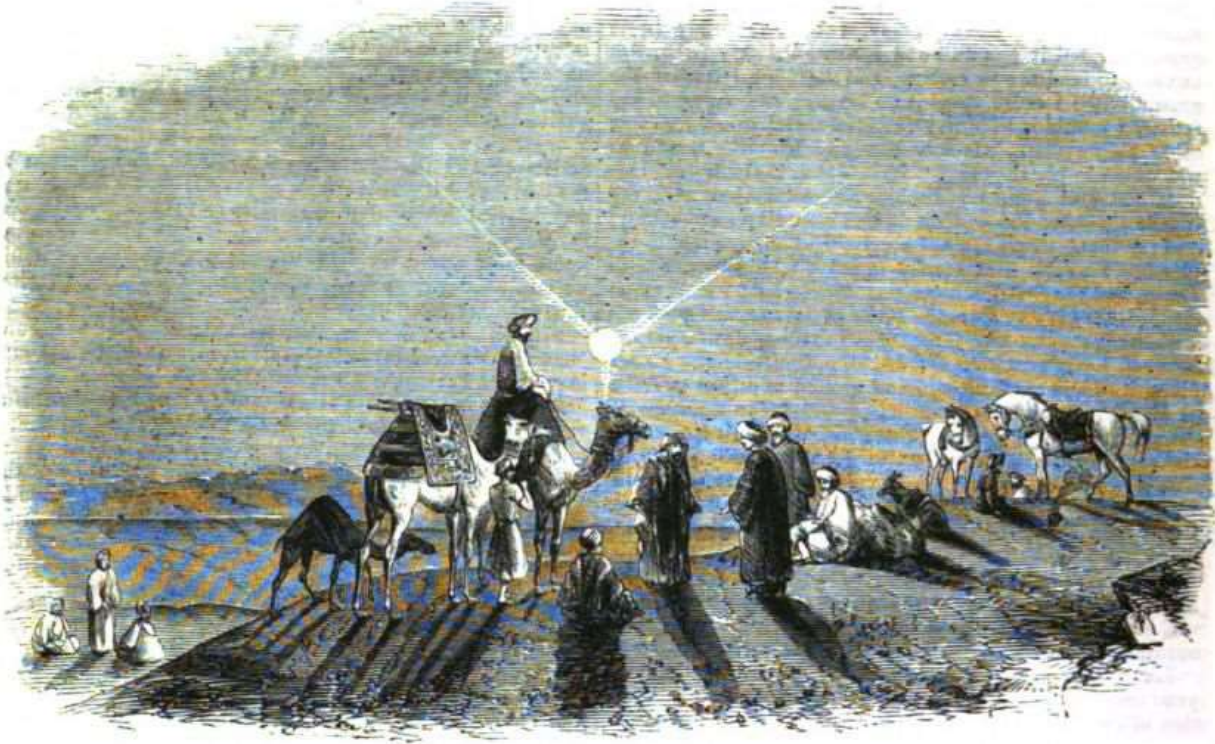
painted from that eminent artist's sketches by Mr. Henry Warren and Mr. James Fahey. These gentlemen have not only laid the public under immense obligations by their talented efforts in the production of this panorama, but they have also earned for themselves a reputation that will last as long as the taste for the objects they have portrayed shall exist. In concluding this brief sketch of the Nile Panorama, we must not omit to mention the very great assistance and the increasing interest which are given to the various local scenic effects as they arise, by the lectures and detailed information so cleverly and tastefully delivered by Mr. Hingston. Even though possessed of an accurate and minute catalogue, the panorama would be but an unintelligible picture, as far as history is concerned, if wanting this valuable accompaniment.

The following descriptions are explanatory of the Four Views we have engraved from this admirable, historical, and instructive Painting.

THE ENTRANCE TO THE DESERT.—This very beautiful scene is intended to represent an incident of common occurrence in that portion of the desert near to Cairo. A kadi, or Turkish magistrate, his officers, and some of the wandering Bedaween with their camels, form the figures in the fore-ground. An enquiry into some thefts committed by the Bedaween is in course of procedure and the accused stands before the kadi to answer the charge. A description of these predatory children of the desert is given in the following striking language by Mr. Kinglake, in his "Eothen." "Almost every man of this race closely resembles his brethren; almost every man has large and finely formed features, but his face is so thoroughly stripped of flesh, and the white folds from his head-gear fall down by his haggard cheeks so much in the burial fashion, that he looks quite sad and ghastly; his large dark orbs roll slowly and solemnly over the white of his deep-set eyes—his countenance shows painful thought and long suffering—the suffering of one fallen from a high estate. His gait is strangely majestic, and he marches along with his simple blanket as though he were wearing the purple. His common talk is a series of piercing screams and cries more painful to the ear than the most excruciating fine music that I ever endured."

THE SITTING STATUES.—These enormous colossi stand on the plain at Western Thebes; and are believed to have been, in their perfect state, representations of Amunophth III., one of the early Pharaohs of Egypt, his name appearing upon them in hieroglyphics. The height of each, with the pedestal, is sixty feet; the material of which they are formed being that description of conglomerate so well known as plum-pudding stone. Each was originally a single block, but one having sustained a fall, and become broken, was afterwards built up of many fragments. Together they are computed to contain about 11,500 cubic feet of stone. The one near which are the figures in the boat, is the renowned Memnon's statue, that in old time gave forth music at day-break. Sounds issued from it so soon as its face became gilded by the earliest rays of the rising sun. The great and the illustrious journeyed from all countries to hear that wondrous music, and have left records of their visits in inscriptions to be found on various parts of the statue. Whence the music originated is a puzzle yet unsolved. While some have considered its cause to have been in some natural property of the stone, others have regarded it as nothing more than a piece of conjuring on the part of the priests. Sir Gardner Wilkinson holds to this latter opinion, because it is recorded that when Hadrian, the Roman emperor, visited the statue, rejoicing at his presence, it uttered the sounds three times instead of once; and it is, to say the least, suspicious that a natural phenomenon should have taken such especial notice of the presence of a monarch.

THE PYRAMIDS.—The pyramids were erected by the kings of ancient Egypt for their sepulchres. The history of a pyramid was discovered by Dr. Lepsius only a few years since. It appears that when a Pharaoh commenced his reign a piece of rock was sought out in the desert, and a chamber excavated to serve for the monarch's tomb. Around this piece of rock a complete coating of stone was put in the first year of the owner's reign; a second coating

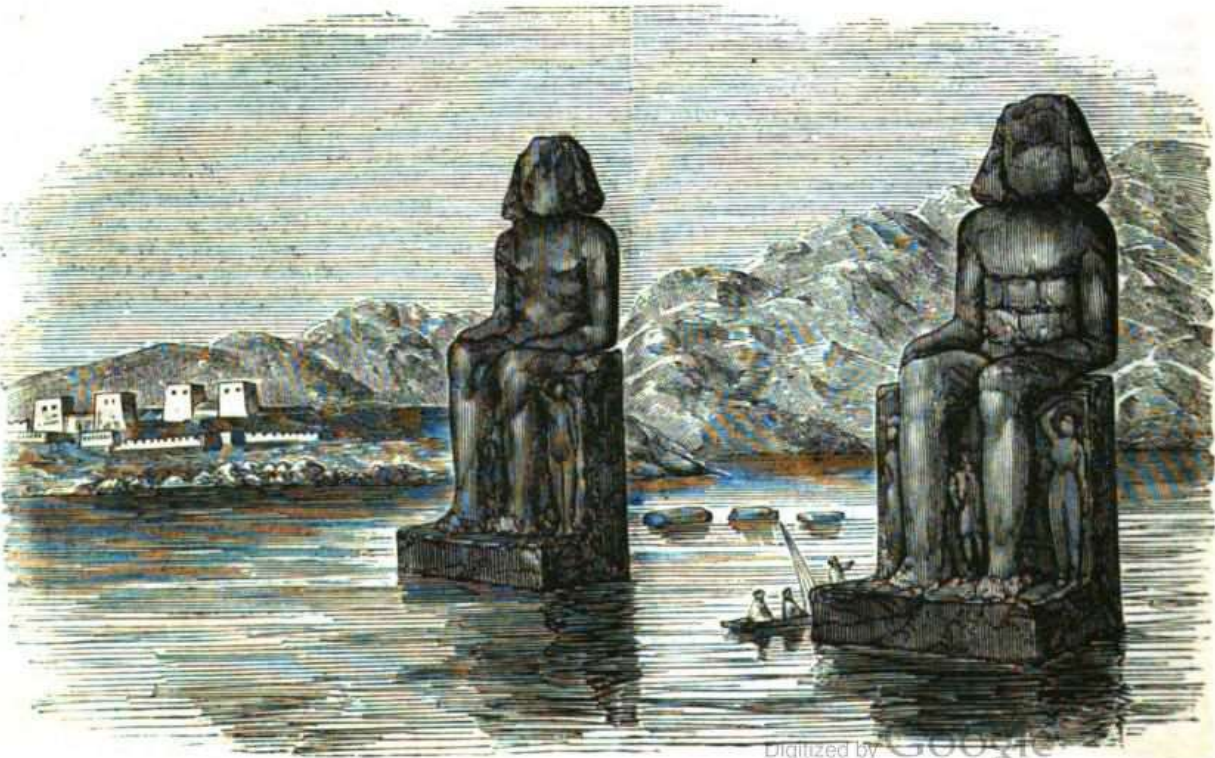


THE ENTRANCE TO THE DESERT.

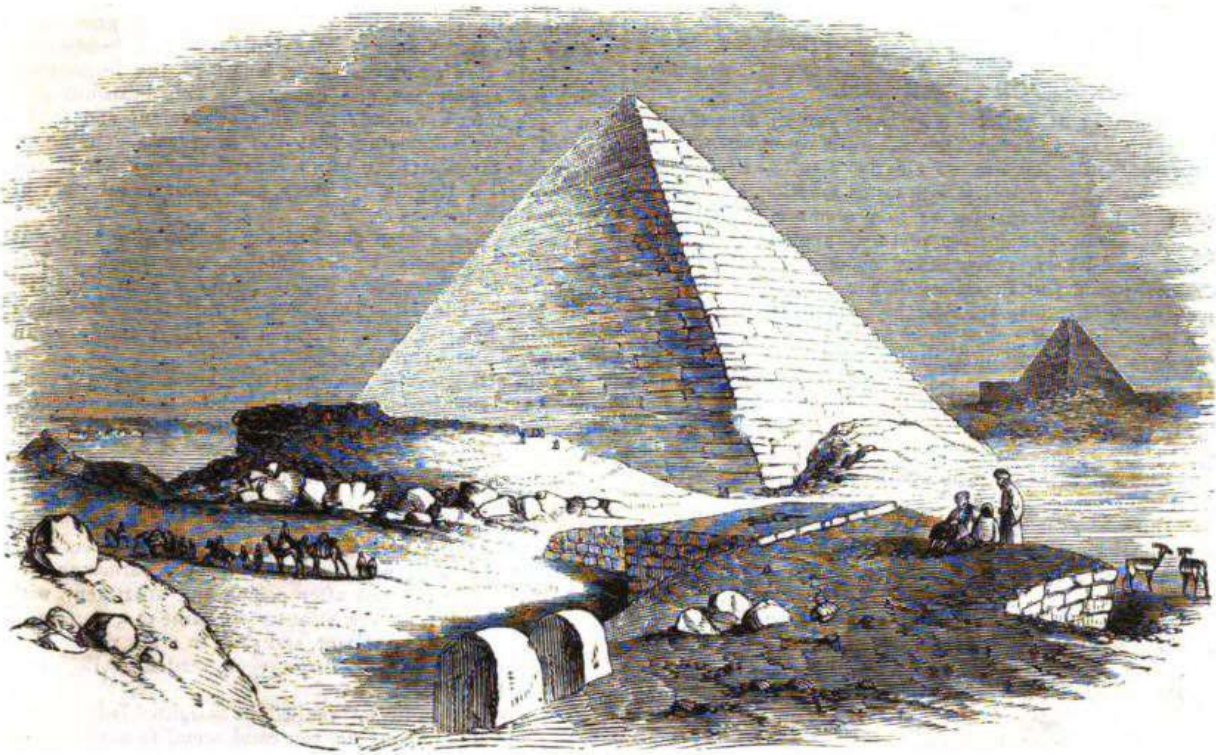
being added in the second year; and a third coating super-added in the third;—the pyramid continuing to grow at the rate of one layer of stones per year for just so many years as the king reigned. At the monarch's decease he was embalmed, placed in the central chamber, the entrance closed, and the pyramid covered with a limestone casing; so that the number of courses of stone in one of these erections gives evidence of the length of its builder's reign. The pyramid given in the sketch is the "Second Pyramid." It was the tomb of King Sensuphis; and was built nearly 4,000 years since. The lime-stone casing has been partially removed, but some still remaining at the summit, the

ascent is difficult, and very seldom made. The casing is 20 feet thick, and every block of it weighs about eight tons.

THE GREAT SPHINX.—The fact of this colossal wonder of antiquity being a mutilated portrait of the Pharaoh whom Moses confronted, and who ruled Egypt when the children of Israel were dwellers in that land, must necessarily render it an object of extreme interest. It was carved out of a piece of lime-stone rock 3,300 years ago. In height it is about 60 feet. The head is more than 140 feet in circumference; while the body, which is that of a lion, is nearly the same number of feet in length. It was intended for a huge image of the greatest of the



THE SITTING STATUES.



THE SECOND PYRAMID.

Egyptian gods; the human head joined to the Lion's body typifying the union of intellectual and physical strength, supposed to be the attribute of the divinity, Amun Ra. Affixed to its breast there is a granite tablet, the hieroglyphical inscriptions on which, state it to have been sculptured in the reign of Thothmes IV., to commemorate a victory gained by his predecessor, the contemporary of Moses, over a tribe called the Hykshos, a race of shepherds who had invaded Egypt, and in honour of the victor, his portrait was given to perpetuity in the countenance of the Sphinx. Presenting an air of grandeur and repose, this awe-inspiring

Colossus has kept its solemn watch in the desert for thirty-three hundred years; having outlived the Pharaohs, the Ptolemies, the Cæsars, and the Khaleefs. Many attempts have been made to bring the lion's body into full view, by clearing away the surrounding sand, in which it is partially enveloped; but the labour has on every occasion been of little avail; the sand re-filling the excavation almost as quickly as it was made, as if the desert were itself conscious of the treasure it possesses, and determined to foster carefully the magnificent charge entrusted to its faithful custody.



THE GREAT SPHINX.